THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI CHENNAMANENI VIDYASAGAR RAO): (a) to (d) Under the Growth Centre Scheme, one growth centre was sanctioned for the State of Manipur in 1998. The contribution of Central Government under the scheme is limited to Rs. 15 crore by way of equity. The remaining funds are to be raised by the State Government and its agencies. So far, Rs.1.5 crore has been released by the Central Government and an expenditure of Rs. .085 crore has been incurred. Acquisition of land by the State Government for setting up of Growth Centre is under progress and it is not possible to fix a time schedule for completion of the centre.

Registration process for intermediates and bulk drug

2722. SHRIMATI SHABANA AZMI: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state :

(a) whether Government have done away with the registration process for intermediates and bulk drug imports meant for exports;

(b) if so, whether this would give a big relief to the domestic pharma industry as it would not only make the import process easier, but would also make the exports economical;

(c) whether this has been welcomed by the exporters; and

(d) if so, to what extent it would be helpful?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI CHENNAMANENI VIDYASAGAR RAO): (a) Yes, Sir. The Government has exempted import of drugs under the Advance Licensing Scheme (meant for export production) from the registration process prescribed under the Drugs and Cosmetics Act.

(b) to (d) This exemption will give a fillip to exports by providing easy access to imported inputs meant for export production. Exemption from the registration process will also lead to reduction in transaction costs of the exporters. As such, it has been welcomed at all levels of the exporting community.

Merchandise exports to US

2723. SHRIMATI SHABANA AZMI: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state :

(a) whether India's merchandise exports to the US have registered a robust growth of 27.51 per cent during the fiscal year 2002-03 as against a negative 8.51 per cent growth in exports during the fiscal year 2001-02;

(b) if so, whether imports from US have also gone up;

(c) if so, the efforts being made to improve both the import and export positions from India to USA; and

(d) whether Government are confident that exports to US would be increased during 2003-04?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI CHENNAMANENI VIDYASAGAR RAO): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir.

(c) Export promotion is a continuous and an ongoing process and sustained efforts are made by the Government through participation in major trade fairs and specific trade promotion events, apart from streamlining the information data-base to respond to trade enquiries in a timely and effective manner. Special emphasis is given to developing new and fast growing areas such as information technology.

(d) Yes, Sir.

Trade agreement with Myanmar

2724. SHRI LALIT SURI: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether any trade agreement has recently been signed with Myanmar;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the level of trade with Myanmar at present indicating the quantity and value of commodities exported to and imported from that country?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI CHENNAMANENI VIDYASAGAR RAO): (a) and (b) A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on the establishment of Joint Trade Committee (JTC) between the Government of India and the Government of Union of Myanmar was signed at Yangon on 14th July, 2003 during the visit of Commerce and Industry Minister. The salient features of the JTC